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LARGE-SCALE AND SMALL-SCALE FARMING.*

BY T. N. CARVER, *Professor of Economics, Harvard University.*

It seems to me that this is one of the most interesting and instructive meetings I have ever attended, and I am particularly glad to hear the fact brought out that an increase in the intensive farming may and does go on while farms are growing a little larger and the farming population a little scarcer. That is, the soil is being made to produce more through more thorough cultivation, not through the use of more labor, but by the use of more capital. That seems to be the significant thing that is happening in the state of Iowa and the agricultural regions of the surrounding states.

It seems to me that in view of the facts that have been brought out today we may be justified in redefining large-scale, medium-scale, and small-scale farming. It is obvious that acreage alone is not a basis for this classification. You may have large-scale farming on twenty acres, and you may have small-scale farming on two hundred acres. It seems to me that the definition and the classification should be based on the general character of the business unit known as the farm, with the labor supply as the principal ingredient. Large-scale farming would, therefore, be any kind of farming in which the manager did not do the manual work, but confined himself mainly to the work of superintendence. A twenty-acre market garden worked by a gang of laborers under a superintendent would thus be a large-scale farm. And a medium-scale farm might be called a one-family farm, that is, a farm run by the labor of one family, but a farm on which that labor was equipped with the best teams and the best machinery known to agriculture. That seems to be the type of farming which is developing more and more in the prosperous agricultural sections of the West. Then small-

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scale farming would be of a type which might otherwise be termed peasant farming; that is, where the labor is done by the farmer and his family, but where the acreage is too small to permit of good teams or good machinery. This is not the most productive type of farming, though it is the kind which is being advocated by a good many of our long-distance farmers. They are holding up to our admiration the French peasant. But the French peasant who has to make his living by general farming off a thirty-acre farm must of necessity use inferior methods of production. Such a farm will not support a good team of horses, sometimes not even a yoke of oxen. The farmer therefore finds it more economical to use his milch cow for a draft animal and do the rest of the work by hand. That is, he will have more left for himself by this process than he would if he tried to use a team of horses, for the horses would eat up so large a proportion of the total crop as to leave him less for his own family, even though the horses could do more work than the milch cow. This type of small-scale farming also seems to be disappearing, judging by the statistics which have been given us. It seems to me, therefore, that to the discriminating mind the statistics of population in this agricultural area are things to be thankful for rather than to be alarmed over.